

# **Tactical Integration of Special Operations and Conventional Forces Command and Control Functions**

**A Monograph  
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MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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## **Abstract**

“Tactical Integration of Special Operations and Conventional Forces Command and Control Functions” by MAJ Scott A. Jackson, United States Army, 50 pages.

This monograph addresses the question, “Is the 1999 edition of FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, adequate to integrate the actions of special operations forces (SOF) and conventional forces on the contemporary battlefield?” Operations in Afghanistan in 2001 and operations in Iraq in 1991 showed two different degrees of physical integration between SOF and conventional forces on the battlefield. Forces in Afghanistan routinely conducted operations in close proximity to each other, measured in meters. This proximity required close, tactical-level cooperation between SOF and conventional forces. Forces in Iraq in 1991 however, rarely operated in close proximity to each other. Instead, SOF forces supported operational objectives, operating in areas physically separated from conventional forces by hundreds of kilometers. Evidence presented in this monograph shows that although the degree of physical integration was different, the method used to integrate the C2 functions of the two forces was similar, emphasizing a SOF centric approach to command and control of SOF forces.

This monograph examines the integration of command and control (C2) functions of SOF and conventional forces in two case studies. Focus is placed on describing the relationships between physical integration of SOF and conventional forces on the battlefield, the command structure used to control the respective forces, and the methods used to integrate the C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces.

Martin Van Creveld argued that effective organizations are task organized at the lowest level into self-contained units to accomplish complex tasks. Leaders of these organizations are further empowered with the authority to make decisions at the lowest level. Van Creveld’s argument suggests that for disparate units operating on a modern battlefield, the integration of C2 functions must match the level at which they are physically integrated.

This monograph concludes that effective integration between SOF and conventional force C2 was not observed in Afghanistan. A root cause of this ineffectiveness was that the doctrine that governs SOF and conventional force C2 integration, FM 100-25 dated 1999, was inadequate.

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## Introduction

For over 40 years, the analytical community has focused on an expected conflict between massed armored forces operating mostly in the open... Whether this has ever been an adequate treatment of real combat can be debated. But it is clearly at odds with the kind of warfare practiced in Afghanistan last fall and winter... To assess military requirements using tools that cannot address such combat is to reach findings that are meaningless at best, and dangerous at worst.<sup>1</sup>

In 1991 US special operations forces (SOF) and conventional forces, in conjunction with other coalition nations, defeated the Iraqi military in Operation Desert Storm. During this conflict, the Iraqi military was primarily composed of mechanized and motorized forces in excess of one million men distributed along the border between Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. The Iraqi Army was arrayed in defensive belts, with the main line of defense extending from the Persian Gulf westward into the open Iraqi desert, supported by a second line of forces consisting of additional regular army divisions and the Republican Guard Divisions.<sup>2</sup> In view of the threat disposition and the terrain, the United States Central Command, CENTCOM, divided its battlespace in a generally linear fashion, with major units sharing common boundaries and employing designated units to secure exposed flanks.<sup>3</sup> CENTCOM positioned five corps-sized formations opposite the Iraqi dispositions. On order, these corps formations attacked through and around the

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Biddle, *Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy* (Carlisle PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, November 2002), 52. Stephen Biddle is a research professor at the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College.

<sup>2</sup> Frank N Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus, *The Whirlwind War, The United States Army in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1994), <<http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/www/Wwindx.htm>> 02/22/02.

<sup>3</sup> Richard M Swain, *Lucky War, Third Army in Desert Storm*, (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: US Army Command and General College Staff College Press, 1997), 208. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*, characterizes operations as linear and contiguous when units share common boundaries and use dedicated

Iraqi defensive positions to defeat the Iraqi Republican Guard. To support this operation, special operations forces performed special reconnaissance and direct action missions far in advance and to the west of the lead elements of the conventional force. In some cases SOF forces operated as far as 200 miles away from the nearest conventional unit, placing them in distinct areas, widely separated from conventional forces.<sup>4</sup> Because of this physical distance between SOF and conventional forces and the assigned missions of the SOF and conventional forces, CENTCOM integrated the actions of SOF through coordination between the service component headquarters.<sup>5</sup>

In November 2001, the United States began deploying conventional forces to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Following the collapse of the Taliban government in November 2001, Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants dispersed to the restrictive, mountainous terrain in the eastern region of Afghanistan to operate from concealed prepared cave complexes deep in the mountains.<sup>6</sup> To attack these remnants, CENTCOM chose to configure the battlespace in Afghanistan in a noncontiguous fashion. CENTCOM established bases of operations in Bagram and Kandahar (over 275 miles apart). From these bases, conventional forces conducted full spectrum operations in temporary areas of operations throughout the joint area of operations (JOA),

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units to secure exposed flanks (p. 4-20). Swain's illustration on page 208 depicts five corps abreast with a dedicated division on the far western flank protecting the exposed flank.

<sup>4</sup> Swain, 177.

<sup>5</sup> COL William F. Faistenhammer, Interviewed by author, via telephone, 23 JAN 03. COL Faistenhammer served as the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG (A) Executive Officer during Operation Desert Storm. COL Faistenhammer recounted that the component headquarters under CENTCOM coordinated their actions based on the intelligence derived from SOF missions and that coordination between SOF and conventional forces rarely extended below this level. See Swain, 28-29, for additional information regarding the SOF command structure.

<sup>6</sup> Biddle, 57.

capitalizing on their mobility, manpower, and firepower.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, SOF deployed from these bases and conducted special reconnaissance, direct action, and unconventional warfare missions to support operational level as well as tactical objectives throughout the JOA. These operations took advantage of their cultural skills, access to precision firepower, and unique military capabilities.<sup>8</sup>

Although the missions of both SOF and conventional forces in Afghanistan were similar to their respective operations in Iraq in 1991, the tactical situation and nature of the targets often required SOF and conventional forces to operate in close proximity (sometimes as close as 200 meters) to each other.<sup>9</sup> Unlike Operation Desert Storm, this close physical proximity between special operations and conventional forces required a great degree of tactical-level cooperation between SOF and conventional forces headquarters.<sup>10</sup> However, throughout the period November 2001 to December 2002, the headquarters responsible to integrate SOF and conventional forces remained at the joint

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<sup>7</sup> Unattributed, CGSC class brief by former division staff officer in 101<sup>st</sup> AA Division during Operation Anaconda, 22 April 2002. As described by this officer, units did not share common boundaries and were separated by over 275 nm. As described in FM 3-0, p. 6-16, this is the primary characteristic of a noncontiguous battlefield.

<sup>8</sup> “The Liberation of Mazar-e Sharif: 5<sup>th</sup> AFG conducts UW in Afghanistan,” *Special Warfare*, 15, June 2002, 40. SOF’s ability to communicate with and understand the cultural background of the Northern Alliance facilitated the rapid integration of SOF into the Northern Alliance operations. Additionally, SOF possessed military skills such as application of precision air power, and extended communications, which facilitated operations in this environment.

<sup>9</sup> In both Iraq in 1991 and Afghanistan 2001, SOF conducted special reconnaissance, direct action and coordinated the actions of indigenous and multinational forces. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, conventional forces conducted offensive and defensive operations.

<sup>10</sup> COL David Gray, Interviewed by MAJ Phillip Kraus, Bagram Afghanistan, 21 August 2002, CJTF-180 Oral History Program. In the interview with MAJ Karnes, COL Gray emphasizes that one of the most significant lessons that he would take away from his experience in Afghanistan was the low-level, joint nature of operations in Afghanistan. What he described as a “team of teams on the tactical battlefield.”

forces level, similar to Operation Desert Storm.<sup>11</sup> In order to understand the impact of this singular approach to integrating SOF and conventional forces in different circumstances, one must first understand integration of military forces.

Integration is “the act or process of making whole or entire.”<sup>12</sup> For military operations, there are two forms of integration: physical integration and integration of command and control. Physical integration relates to the application of effects on the same target by disparate forces. An example is the use of close air support (CAS) in support of a ground force direct fire engagement. In this example, both forces are oriented on the same objective with a common overall purpose, usually the destruction of the enemy force. The effective employment of these two distinct forces requires the other form of integration: integrated command and control (C2) functions.

Integrating C2 functions completes the act of making military operations whole in that it joins two distinct command systems toward a common purpose. Martin Van Creveld, author of *Command in War*, stated that the ideal command system would be a single general possessing a genius’ intellect to control all functions.<sup>13</sup> Van Creveld’s description supports the doctrinal concept of unity of command, as described in Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action*, with one commander exercising authority over all forces on a single objective.<sup>14</sup> Although difficult to achieve in practice, the concept of unity of

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<sup>11</sup> This inclusive period, November 2001 to December 2002, is a reflection of the research conducted in preparing this monograph. This monograph will not address the status of current operations or organizations still involved or ongoing in Afghanistan.

<sup>12</sup> Webster On-line Dictionary, <<http://dictionary.reference.com>>, 17 Mar 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 268.

<sup>14</sup> Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 0-2, Unified Action* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 10 July 2001), III-13.

command is the goal for integrating C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces.

At a minimum, integrated C2 functions should achieve unity of effort, where all forces are working towards a common purpose.<sup>15</sup> To achieve unity of command or effort, military forces rely on proper command or support relationships, common communications capabilities, and a common understanding of the commander's intent.<sup>16</sup> In the close air support example, integrated C2 is facilitated by a clear support relationship between the air asset and the ground unit, adequate communications capabilities between the air asset and the ground unit, and lastly Air Force liaisons, which understand the commander's intent as well as how to properly employ the air asset itself.<sup>17</sup>

The echelon at which integration of C2 functions should occur is driven by the level at which physical integration occurs.<sup>18</sup> To continue our close air support example, consider the impact on a mechanized battalion task force's ability to employ CAS effectively if the means to communicate with and employ air assets resided above the task force level, at the division headquarters for example. Integrating C2 functions between ground and air elements at division level would affect the employment of CAS

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<sup>15</sup> JP 0-2, III-13.

<sup>16</sup> JP 0-2, III-17.

<sup>17</sup> Although non-Air Force personnel can employ CAS, it is not the norm. Considered emergency CAS or ECAS, there are several restrictions and requirements on its employment that are outside the scope of this paper and not relevant to this argument. For additional information on this specific issue, see, MAJ Vance J. Nannini, "Universal Observers: Punching our FIST into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Field Artillery*, May-June 1997, 14. In this article, MAJ Nannini states, "Air Force doctrine permits Army personnel to control CAS only under emergency CAS (ECAS) situations. The Air Force defines ECAS as those CAS missions conducted under emergency wartime conditions when a qualified terminal attack controller is unable to provide terminal attack control."

<sup>18</sup> Van Creveld, 268. In his conclusion as to what is an effective organization, Van Creveld states that the ideal organization would be task organized at the lowest level (physical integration) and would stress

by making it slower and less responsive, undoubtedly less accurate, and inherently more risky. In short, this command structure would make the employment of CAS less effective. As a matter of practice and organizational structure, battalion task forces are currently the lowest level that typically employs CAS.<sup>19</sup> Currently, the U.S. Air Force provides U.S. Army infantry and armor battalions with Air Force personnel (ETAC) for terminal control of CAS aircraft. In this example, the physical integration of air assets is consistent with the level of integration in the organization's C2 structure.

However, what if the scenario required elements smaller than a battalion to employ CAS? During Operation Enduring Freedom, combat platoons frequently operated out of direct visual contact with their battalion headquarters, where Air Force liaison personnel resided. As a result, observed targets often were not destroyed. Major General (MG) Franklin Hagenbeck, Commander, Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Mountain in Afghanistan expressed his frustration regarding this situation. MG Hagenbeck stated,

Because of the complexity of their [USAF] precision munitions, they [the USAF] will not shoot JDAMs without a ground forward air controller calling them in. There are not enough GFACS in their inventory to support every ground maneuver element. And as I said, this war became platoon fights separated by distances in very rugged terrain with too few ETACs to go around.<sup>20</sup>

In this situation, the combat infantry platoons did not have Air Force terminal control parties habitually assigned to them. Thus, they lacked access to integrated C2

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empowering subordinates in order to push the decision making threshold as far down as possible (integration of C2 functions).

<sup>19</sup> Army forces are capable of employing CAS below the battalion level, however this is an exception to the norm. To do so, requires additional or reallocation of assets within the organization.

<sup>20</sup> MG Franklin L Hagenbeck, interviewed by Robert H. McElroy, "Afghanistan, Fire Support for Operation Anaconda," *Field Artillery*, September-October 2002, 9.

functions that resided at the battalion level headquarters, but were necessary at the platoon level to facilitate efficient physical integration between Army and Air Force assets on a single objective. In this case, the need for physical integration exceeded the level of C2 integration of the organization and prevented the effective employment of Air Force delivered munitions.

On the surface, the challenges of physical integration and integration of C2 functions appear to apply to the relationships between SOF and conventional forces in Afghanistan from November 2001 to December 2002. Is this a doctrinal problem?

Army SOF C2 doctrine, as prescribed in FM 100-25, *Army Special Operations*, dated August 1999, remains largely unchanged from the original version published in the wake of Operation Desert Storm, as it relates to the integration of C2 between SOF and conventional forces. Both versions of FM 100-25 stressed a centralized, command structure under the authority of SOF headquarters which integrated its actions with the conventional force through coordination with the other component headquarters, as witnessed in Operation Desert Storm.

This method was satisfactory in Iraq in 1991 because conventional forces, division and below, rarely conducted any operations requiring physical integration with SOF operations. SOF focused on theater objectives, not in close proximity to conventional forces and integration of C2 functions occurred between the SOF and conventional force component headquarters.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, during operations in Afghanistan, physical integration occurred between special operations and conventional

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<sup>21</sup> Faistenhammer. COL Faistenhammer explained that the three primary SOF missions of direct action, special reconnaissance, and coalition support occurred in separate areas from conventional forces, often separated by not only space but also time.

forces quite frequently at the brigade, battalion, and even company level while the integrating headquarters remained at the unified command/joint task force headquarters.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly, the requirement for close cooperation between special operations and conventional forces in Afghanistan resulted in a degree of physical integration between SOF and conventional forces that was very different from Operation Desert Storm. Given the different degrees of SOF and conventional force physical integration witnessed in Iraq in 1991 and Afghanistan in 2001, is the single US doctrinal approach to integrating C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces at component headquarters level, as contained FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Special Operations*, adequate?

This monograph's concern is that the 1999 version of FM 100-25 continues to use the SOF C2 model witnessed in Desert Storm. This could reinforce a common perception that doctrine supports the last war and not the future war, providing a limited basis for doctrine development. Stephen Biddle, a research professor at the Strategic Studies Institute, argues that development of a military doctrine, based on a single perspective, is "meaningless at best and dangerous at worst."<sup>23</sup> In his paper, "Afghanistan and the Future of Warfare: Implications for Army and Defense Policy," Stephen Biddle argued that warfighting doctrine should be based on a holistic analysis, incorporating balance and flexibility to create a force capable of operating in multiple

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<sup>22</sup> COL David Gray, Interviewed by author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 9 September 2002. COL Gray served as the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Div G3 during operations in Afghanistan from December 2001 to August 2002. During this period, COL Gray planned and coordinated initial conventional operations based in Uzbekistan, Operation Anaconda, and Operation Mountain Lion. LTC Martin Schweitzer, Interviewed by author via telephone on 27 JAN 2002, Battalion Commander, 3-505 PIR, 82d ABN Division. LTC Schweitzer's battalion deployed to Afghanistan from JUN to DEC 2002 as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. During that deployment, his battalion conducted extensive operations with SOF in the contemporary environment.

<sup>23</sup> Biddle, 52.

environments.<sup>24</sup> Thus US Army SOF doctrine must prescribe how to effectively integrate SOF and conventional forces C2 functions to account for a broad range of possible scenarios involving differing levels of physical integration between these two types of forces.

This monograph investigates whether current special operations command and control (C2) doctrine as contained in the 1999 edition of FM 100-25, *Army Special Operations*, adequately guides the integration of C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces on the contemporary and future battlefield. To determine if the 1999 FM 100-25 is adequate to guide integration of the SOF and conventional forces C2 functions on the contemporary and future battlefield, this monograph is structured into three parts. The first section describes and compares the battlefield environments of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom. The second section uses anecdotal evidence from Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan to evaluate the 1999 edition of FM 100-25 against three criteria: proper command relationships, timely decision making, and robust integration mechanisms. Use of these criteria should help to determine if the manual is adequate for a broad range of contemporary and future combat scenarios. Furthermore, these criteria, derived from Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action*, are relevant to an evaluation of Army C2 doctrine due to the authoritative nature of this joint capstone doctrinal manual and the requirement for subordinate doctrine to nest with higher doctrine.<sup>25</sup> These criteria, derived from JP 0-2, are described below.

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<sup>24</sup> Biddle, 50-58.

<sup>25</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-0, Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 1-14.

The first criterion is proper command relationships. A proper command relationship provides the requisite command authority at the echelon at which physical integration occurs. This monograph examines whether the command structure proposed in FM 100-25, addresses proper command relationships at the requisite level of physical integration. The second criterion is timely decision-making. Timely decision-making is defined as the ability to manage information and make decisions in a time frame commensurate with the needs of the situation. This monograph determines if the command structure prescribed in FM 100-25 facilitates information flow between SOF and conventional forces at a sufficient velocity to make timely decisions based on the level of physical integration. The last criterion is robust integration mechanisms. This monograph defines robust integration mechanisms as the exchange of liaisons to the level required by physical integration. This monograph evaluates whether the 1999 version of FM 100-25 prescribes sufficient liaisons throughout the operational SOF and conventional force headquarters to facilitate integration of C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces.

Upon completion of the analysis, the last section provides conclusions. Recommendations to improve SOF C2 doctrine in FM 100-25, if deemed necessary, focus on efforts to increase the flexibility of SOF C2 doctrine for application across a wide range of scenarios to ensure that integration of SOF and conventional force C2 functions occurs at the same level as physical integration.

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## The Environment

This chapter describes the military environments in Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. It illustrates the missions of SOF and conventional forces, the command structure for these forces, the degree of physical integration displayed between SOF and conventional forces, and the methods and doctrine used to integrate the C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces. Understanding the differences between the two environments is necessary for evaluation of applicable SOF C2 doctrine.

### **Operation Desert Storm**

On 2 August 1991, military forces of the Republic of Iraq invaded Kuwait in order to acquire and exploit its natural resources.<sup>26</sup> In response to this aggression, the United States and its coalition partners began the largest military deployment since the Vietnam War. Beginning with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division on 7 August 1991, the United States Army deployed seven of its twelve active divisions and two of its three active armored cavalry regiments along with the necessary supporting forces to initially deter Iraqi aggression.<sup>27</sup> By January 1991, the United States military had postured a joint force in excess of 500,000 personnel in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and surrounding nations, to prosecute offensive operations in support of Operation Desert Storm, the liberation of Kuwait.

Military analysis of the terrain in the area of operations for ground forces determined it was well suited for modern mechanized warfare. Observation in the open

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<sup>26</sup> Kenneth M Paddock, *The Threatening Storm, The Case for Invading Iraq* (New York: Random House Publishers, 2002), 145.

<sup>27</sup> Swain, 36.

desert was generally unlimited except in times of poor weather. The open desert provided minimal cover and concealment to the Iraqi forces either from US ground or air systems. Most notably, the western desert lacked any substantial obstacles, either natural or man-made, to impede movement of mechanized forces or disrupt their direct or indirect fires, allowing combat units to maneuver in extended formations along nearly any avenue of approach.<sup>28</sup> Given America's technological advantage, in this relatively unrestricted terrain the U.S. military moved faster, saw and shot farther than the enemy in most engagements. The military aspects of terrain clearly favored massed, armored warfare for which the US was well prepared.

Facing the US forces was the Iraqi military, largely a conventional force based strongly on the doctrine and equipment of the former Soviet Union. It was organized in military formations of platoons through corps.<sup>29</sup> Military historian Frank Schubert, author of the *Whirlwind War*, described the disposition of Iraqi forces prior to the start of the offensive campaign. Schubert states, “[the Iraqi army forces formed] a nearly solid line of infantry divisions, stretching from the Persian Gulf across southern Kuwait and extending about 100 miles farther west into southern Iraq.”<sup>30</sup> Backstopping this first line of defense was the centerpiece of the Iraqi Army, the Republican Guard Corps with five

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<sup>28</sup> The most prominent natural restrictions to movement included the Wadi Al Batin on the western boundary of Kuwait as well as the sandy environment itself. This limited wheeled traffic to the few roads in the AO. Additionally, the oil pumping complexes in southern Kuwaiti hindered movement of forces operating in the eastern area.

<sup>29</sup> Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus. Schubert et al, devotes extensive effort to explaining the connection between Soviet doctrine and the Iraqi Army by describing both the structure and the doctrine of the Iraqi military.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, Chap 6.

of its seven divisions.<sup>31</sup> Republican Guard divisions were better equipped than the standard Iraqi Army division and the Republican Guard forces represented Iraq's most significant offensive ground capability. The Republican Guard was a primary concern of the coalition campaign planners leading General Schwarzkopf, the Commander in Chief, CENTCOM, to identify it as the center of gravity.<sup>32</sup>

CENTCOM's offensive campaign objective to defeat the Iraqi threat was two-fold. The first objective of coalition forces was to liberate Kuwait. The second objective was to destroy the offensive warfighting capability of the Iraqi military.<sup>33</sup> To achieve these objectives, CENTCOM's plan incorporated an extended air operation designed to isolate the Iraqi field army, gain air superiority, and attrit the Iraqi field army to achieve favorable force ratios between US and Iraqi ground forces before the conduct of the subsequent ground operation.<sup>34</sup> The air operation began on 17 January 1991 and lasted thirty-nine days. On 24 February 1991, CENTCOM initiated the ground operation of the campaign.<sup>35</sup>

CENTCOM's concept for the ground operation employed a two-corps envelopment to defeat the Republican Guard Corps and liberate Kuwait.<sup>36</sup> CENTCOM

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<sup>31</sup> Frank N. Schubert and Theresa L. Kraus, Chap 6. The Iraqi Republican Guard had three armored divisions and two infantry divisions in southern Iraq that could affect Operation Desert Storm.

<sup>32</sup> Michael R Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 157.

<sup>33</sup>Swain, 78, 83.

<sup>34</sup> Swain, 78. Swain describes that the campaign goal for the air operation was to reduce the Iraqi Army facing coalition forces by 50% prior to the start of the ground operation in order to negate the initial Iraqi quantitative superiority particularly in armored systems.

<sup>35</sup> Gordon and Trainor, 205, 355.

<sup>36</sup> Swain, 95.

arrayed its forces in a contiguous manner with neighboring units protecting each other's flank. The major units arrayed from east to west were: Joint Forces Command-East, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force (1 MEF), Joint Forces Command-North, VII US Corps, and XVIII ABN Corps.<sup>37</sup> On the far western flank, the 6<sup>th</sup> French Light Armored Division protected the exposed flank of XVIII Airborne Corps.<sup>38</sup> The operational concept required three corps, JFC-East, 1MEF, and JFC-North, to attack to fix enemy forces in the southern Kuwaiti desert. Simultaneously, the XVIII ABN Corps and VII Corps attacked in the west to penetrate the initial Iraqi defenses. After breaking through the front line defenses in the west, these two corps attacked north approximately 200 Km and then turned east to focus their efforts against the Republican Guard Corps units located behind the main line of defense.<sup>39</sup> VII Corps' and XVIII ABN Corps' maneuver was designed to defeat the Republican Guard forces through physical destruction or by cutting the their lines of communication back to Baghdad.<sup>40</sup>

Throughout Operation Desert Storm, in support of the ground operation, special operations forces conducted three missions, special reconnaissance, direct action, and coalition support.<sup>41</sup> For example, units of the Army's Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta (SFOD-D) as well as Britain's 22<sup>nd</sup> SAS Regiment conducted special

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<sup>37</sup> Swain, 208.

<sup>38</sup> Swain, 229.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon and Trainor, 378.

<sup>40</sup> The ARCENT ground attack was unable to accomplish this effect to the degree desired by GEN Schwarzkopf for many reasons. The overwhelming success of the supporting attacks forced the Republican Guard forces to withdraw to Iraq sooner than expected and desynchronized the maneuver of the ARCENT main ground attack. For a detailed analysis of why the Republican Guard forces escaped, see Gordon and Trainor, 463-476.

<sup>41</sup> Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993, 177), 368.

reconnaissance missions to identify Iraqi Scud launchers in the western Iraqi desert. These forces also provided terminal guidance for Air Force assets that destroyed the SCUD launchers from 25 January 1991 to the end of the campaign.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, soldiers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group (3/5 SFG) were inserted in front of the US VII Corps and XVIII ABN Corps prior to the start of the ground operation to identify the second echelon enemy formations and direct air interdiction of these forces.<sup>43</sup> On limited occasions, special operations forces conducted direct action attacks against SCUD launchers and command facilities in the western Iraqi desert. In another operation, SOF destroyed an underground fiber optic communications cable west of Baghdad that transmitted firing orders and data to the SCUDS.<sup>44</sup>

The third mission that special operations forces performed was coalition support. In this case, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> SFG fielded over one hundred coalition support teams (CST) to serve as liaisons between the Joint Forces Command-North and CENTCOM Headquarters.<sup>45</sup> The purpose of these teams was two fold. First, the teams provided the Arab forces access to coalition airpower through SOF communications systems. Second, CST's provided the CENTCOM commander with "ground truth"

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<sup>42</sup> Atkinson, 177.

<sup>43</sup> Faistenhammer.

<sup>44</sup> Atkinson, 181.

<sup>45</sup> LTC(R) Marc Johnson, personal interview with author, 4 September 2002. LTC (R) Johnson was a battalion S-3 in 1/5 SFG during Operation Desert Storm. 1/5 SFG was one of two battalions responsible for the Coalition Support Team mission in Operation Desert Storm. Joint Forces Command-North was composed of the Arab coalition countries (Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia). These forces were not formally under GEN Schwarzkopf's command authority and therefore did not report directly to CENTCOM HQ.

intelligence of what was going on inside the Arab headquarters and inside the Arab area of operation.<sup>46</sup>

To control these SOF missions, CENTCOM placed all SOF under the operational control (OPCON) of Special Operation Central Command (SOCCENT).<sup>47</sup> SFOD-D assets conducting special reconnaissance and direct action in pursuit of SCUDs were under the direct command of SOCSENT.<sup>48</sup> SOCSENT commanded the remaining SOF forces in theater through the respective service SOF headquarters. Command authority flowed from the service SOF headquarters, to the subordinate SOF unit headquarters. Specifically, command authority of Army Special Forces flowed from SOCSENT to the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG Headquarters to a Forward Operating Base (FOB) to the operational assets. The 5th SFG units conducting special reconnaissance, direct action and coalition support all reported to their assigned Forward Operating Base (FOB) under 5<sup>th</sup> SFG and then to SOCSENT.<sup>49</sup>

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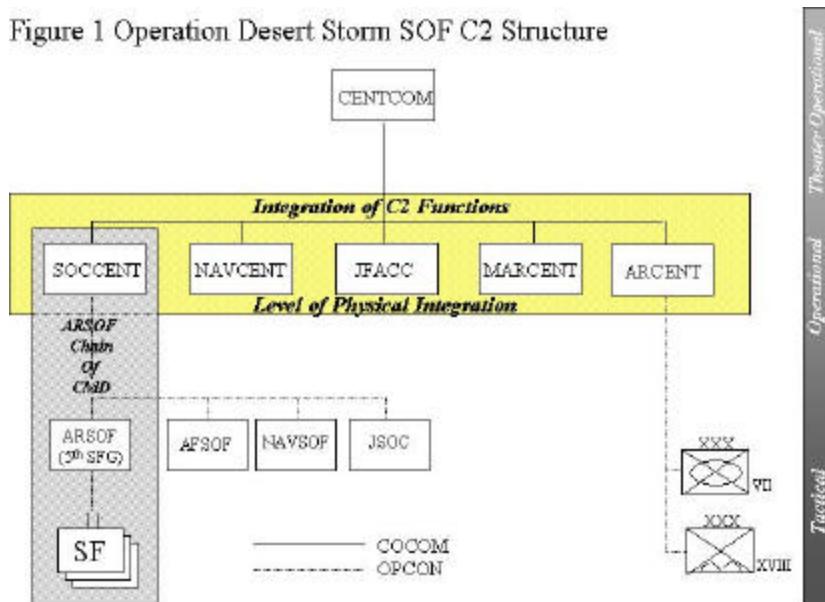
<sup>46</sup> Atkinson, p. 369. Because of the separate command structure between Arab forces and CENTCOM headquarters, Gen Schwarzkopf relied on these teams for accurate information regarding Arab operations and charged these SF battalions with ensuring that he always had “ground truth.”

<sup>47</sup> Swain, 78. Swain described the SOF command relationship between SOF and 3<sup>d</sup> US Army (ARCENT) in his book, *Lucky War*, stating that SOF remained under the centralized control of SOCSENT. Joint Publication, 0-2, *Unified Action*, defines OPCON as the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. See page GL-10.

<sup>48</sup> Faistenhammer. Confirmed during my telephonic interview. Atkinson provides additional detail into this relationship between GEN Downing’s JSOC task force and GEN Schwarzkopf’s headquarters in excellent detail in his book, *Crusade*, 85.

<sup>49</sup> Faistenhammer and Johnson. Both Special Forces officers had personal experience with this command structure in Desert Storm. Faistenhammer also explained that a Forward Operating Base represented a deployed Special Force Battalion Headquarters. It provided command and control of deployed SF assets and mission preparation facilities.

Figure 1 Operation Desert Storm SOF C2 Structure



Source: Compiled from Swain's *Lucky War*, and Faistenhammer, interviewed by author.

In Operation Desert Storm, physical integration between SOF and conventional forces occurred at the operational level.<sup>50</sup> Specifically, SOF forces oriented on operational level targets and reported to operational level headquarters. SOF special reconnaissance missions were focused on answering the questions of ARCENT and the CENTCOM Commander in support of the ground campaign.<sup>51</sup> SOF direct action missions supported theater operational objectives, namely the destruction of theater ballistic missiles and enemy theater C2 capabilities.<sup>52</sup> Lastly, Special Forces soldiers with the Arab Coalition units located between the I MEF and VII Corps provided

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<sup>50</sup> As defined in the introduction, physical integration relates the application of effects by disparate forces against the same objective.

<sup>51</sup> Faistenhammer. Examples of the ARCENT information requirements supported by SOF included: where are the 2<sup>nd</sup> echelon forces, what is the trafficability for wheeled and tracked vehicles in the western desert, and where are the SCUD launchers?

<sup>52</sup> Faistenhammer.

information of value to ARCENT, Marine Central Command (MARCENT), and the CENTCOM Commander.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly, integration of SOF and conventional force C2 functions in Operation Desert Storm occurred at the operational level with information exchange between SOF and conventional forces occurring at the service component headquarters. First, SOCSENT, in conjunction with 5<sup>th</sup> SFG headquarters, developed, tasked, and controlled special reconnaissance missions in support of ARCENT. Second, SOCSENT coordinated the intelligence efforts and disseminated information developed from the CST with ARCENT and MARCENT. Third, SOCSENT also disseminated and coordinated the intelligence generated by SOF's direct action and special reconnaissance operations in the western desert with the joint force air component headquarters (JFACC).<sup>54</sup>

The centralized SOF command arrangement in Operation Desert Storm reflected the existing SOF C2 doctrine as written in the 1991 version of FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations*.<sup>55</sup> Three views of SOF integration with conventional forces contained in the manual are clearly seen in the conduct of Operation Desert Storm. First,

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<sup>53</sup> Johnson and Faistenhammer. The MARCENT headquarters was also the 1 MEF headquarters in this case. Specific information provided by the CSTs to CENTCOM, ARCENT, and MARCENT included: where are the Arab forces now, what enemy are they facing, and what are their capabilities for further operations?

<sup>54</sup> Although a joint headquarters, the JFACC headquarters was based on the headquarters of 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force who was the US Air Force component headquarters in CENTCOM (CENTAF).

<sup>55</sup> Confirmed during interview with COL Faistenhammer, SOF doctrine was in a state of flux at the time of Desert Storm, the most current doctrine at the time was dated 1981; however new doctrine (FM 100-25) was being prepared and was subsequently released following Desert Storm. This manual was accepted as doctrine during Desert Storm by the force and more accurately depicts the doctrinal condition of Special Forces during Desert Storm than the preceding 1981 manual. Many of the actual formations and means used in ODS (i.e. SOCCE) were not contained in the 1981 manual and were captured in the first release of FM 100-25.

the 1991 version of Field Manual 100-25, through its figures and discussion, depicted the battlefield as linear with contiguous unit boundaries.<sup>56</sup> In these depictions, SOF operated in distinct areas separate from conventional forces. Thus, as a supporting operation, SOF were generally isolated spatially from the actions of conventional forces.<sup>57</sup> Second, the 1991 manual stressed a centralized C2 structure to support SOF assets in theater. Integration of SOF and conventional forces C2 functions thus occurred at the operational level under the theater special operations command (SOC). The 1991 manual stated, “The regional CINC normally exercises COCOM of his joint SOF through a sub-unified special operations command (SOC).”<sup>58</sup> This doctrinal command structure was reflected in the SOF-centric command structure used in Operation Desert Storm (see Figure 1). Lastly, the 1991 version of FM 100-25 stressed synchronization of SF and conventional forces missions rather than physical integration of SOF and conventional force units. It clearly states,

The focus should be on synchronization (not physical integration) of heavy, light, and SO forces on the ground. Synchronization involves the simultaneous or sequenced execution of separate actions in time and space to achieve a synergistic effect.<sup>59</sup>

This emphasis on separate actions in time and space to achieve effects versus physical integration of SOF and conventional forces is reflected in the geographic separation of and the distances between SOF and conventional forces.

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<sup>56</sup> See p. 4-24, FM 100-25, DEC 1991 for a depiction of the battlefield framework.

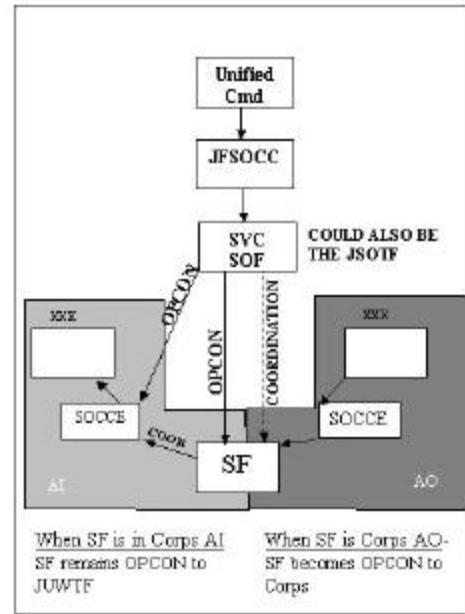
<sup>57</sup> See pages 4-39 through 4-41 of FM 100-25 DEC 1991, for graphic depictions of the spatial relationship of SOF to conventional forces.

<sup>58</sup> FM 100-25, DEC 1991, Ibid, 4-28. COCOM is a command relationship reserved for regional combatant commanders, it cannot be delegated. Regional combatant commanders usually delegate command responsibility using OPCON and TACON command relationships through his subordinate headquarters. See JP 0-2, *Unified Action*, III-10.

In the 1991 version FM 100-25 integration of C2 functions at the component level was the norm. However, the manual did address exceptions to this command arrangement when SOF and conventional forces operated in close proximity to each other. The manual provided three different scenarios to illustrate how to integrate SOF and conventional forces C2 functions when physical integration of SOF and conventional forces occurred below the operational level.

The first scenario illustrated how to integrate SOF and conventional forces when the corps area of interest (AI) encompassed the SOF area of operation (AO).<sup>60</sup> In this situation, the 1991 version of FM 100-25 prescribed that the Army Special Operations Task Force (ARSOTF) establish a Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE) and collocate it with the corps headquarters.<sup>61</sup> According to the manual, a SOCCE is a SOF element that can either be a coordination element or a command cell for SOF elements. During Operation Desert Storm, COL Jesse Johnson, the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG Commander, established a SOCCE within the

**Figure 2. Doctrinal SOF C2 Structure as per 1991 FM 100-25**



<sup>59</sup> FM 100-25, DEC 1991, 4-36.

<sup>60</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Graphics* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 32. Area of Interest: A geographical area from which information and intelligence are required to execute successful tactical operations and to plan for future operations. It includes any threat forces or characteristics of the battlefield environment that will significantly influence accomplishment of the command's mission.

<sup>61</sup> FM 100-25, DEC 1991, 4-39.

XVIII ABN Corps Headquarters to facilitate faster information flow between SOF assets and the Corps Headquarters.<sup>62</sup> The SOCCE and all SOF assets remained OPCON to COL Johnson's JSOTF headquarters in Saudi Arabia.<sup>63</sup> In this case, the SOCCE located with XVIII ABN Corps provided a resident SOF coordination element within the conventional force headquarters. The SOCCE's key task was to deconflict special operations within the Corps' area of interest; however, it did not exercise command authority over the SOF assets operating within the XVIII ABN Corps AO.<sup>64</sup>

A second scenario depicted in the 1991 version of FM 100-25 illustrated how to integrate SOF and conventional forces when the corps AO extended to encompass an existing SOF AO, or when the regional combatant commander committed SOF into a corps' AO. In this situation, the manual prescribed that the theater SOC authorize TACON of the SOF unit headquarters to the corps commander.<sup>65</sup> This relationship improved unity of command within the organization as needed by the close proximity of the respective forces; but it maintained the existing SOF chain of command.<sup>66</sup> In this scenario, control over the SOF assets was exercised by the SOCCE through the SOF FOB to the SOF asset in the corps AO.

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<sup>62</sup> The 5<sup>th</sup> SFG(A) Commander, COL Jesse Johnson, wore many hats in Desert Storm. In addition to being the group commander, he was also the ARSOF commander, the JSOTF commander, as well as SOCSENT commander.

<sup>63</sup> Faistenhammer. The reason why a SOCCE was established with XVIII ABN Corps and not VII Corps is unclear, particularly since VII Corps was the ARCENT Main Effort. COL Faistenhammer, supposed it was due to XVIII ABN Corps being on the far western flank of the ground offensive.

<sup>64</sup> USASOC, *XVIII ABN Corps SOCCE Daily Logs, AUG 1990 to FEB 1991*, accessed from the CALL restricted database, 22 NOV 02.

<sup>65</sup> FM 100-25, Dec 1991, p. 4-40. This would usually involve TACON of the FOB to the corps commander. By placing the FOB under the corps headquarters, the SOF chain of command remains intact, and individual SOF assets are still working for a SOF commander.

The third scenario addressed how to integrate SOF C2 when SOF and conventional forces must physically integrate below the division level. In this situation, FM 100-25 prescribed that the conventional headquarters exercise direct OPCON or TACON authority over the deployed SOF through the resident SOCCE.<sup>67</sup> FM 100-25 stated, “The JFC may place SOF under the OPCON or TACON of the division or higher level tactical commander to perform specific missions.”<sup>68</sup> This scenario provided the capability to integrate C2 functions below the corps level, but limited this command arrangement to the division level.<sup>69</sup>

### **Summary**

Operation Desert Storm occurred in an environment well suited for armored warfare. To defeat the Iraqi military, the US conducted a campaign involving a two-corps envelopment against the Iraqi operational center of gravity, the Republican Guard.

<sup>70</sup> Physical integration between SOF and conventional forces at the tactical levels was limited. SOF assets supporting this operation conducted special reconnaissance, direct action, and coalition support, in support of operational level objectives. Consequently, integration of C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces took place at the operational level headquarters, focusing on synchronizing and supporting the operations of the service components within the campaign plan. The physical integration of SOF

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<sup>66</sup> FM 100-25, Dec 1991, p. 4-40.

<sup>67</sup> FM 100-25, Dec 1991, P. 4-41. JP 0-2 defines TACON as command authority over assigned or attached forces or commands, or military capability or forces made available for tasking, that is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements or maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned.

<sup>68</sup> FM 100-25, Dec 1991, 4-40.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 4-41.

and conventional forces and integration of SOF and conventional force C2 functions were in accordance with the 1991 version of FM 100-25, the applicable doctrine for Operation Desert Storm.

In 2001, CENTCOM again provided C2 for both SOF and conventional forces operating in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. As will be shown, the conditions that dictated how SOF and conventional forces physically integrated in Afghanistan were much different than those observed during Operation Desert Storm. However, the method used by CENTCOM to integrate the C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces was similar.

### **Afghanistan**

On 20 October 2001, the United States began infiltrating United States Army Special Forces teams into Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).<sup>71</sup> Their missions were to conduct unconventional warfare (UW) activities to defeat the governing Taliban and resident Al Qaeda forces. To accomplish these tasks, the teams linked up with selected factions within the Northern Alliance, conducted limited training, and provided support to the Northern Alliance.<sup>72</sup> In conjunction with these UW activities, the United States and coalition SOF conducted other special operations throughout the rest of the Afghanistan area of operations to support specific operational objectives. Examples of these operations include the parachute assault onto Objective Rhino on 19 October 2001 by Army Rangers and the simultaneous raid to

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<sup>70</sup> Swain, 83.

<sup>71</sup> “The Liberation of Mazar-e Sharif: 5<sup>th</sup> SFG conducts UW in Afghanistan,” *Special Warfare*, 15, June 2002, 35.

<sup>72</sup> “The Liberation of Mazar-e Sharif: 5<sup>th</sup> SFG conducts UW in Afghanistan,” 35.

capture the Taliban leader Mullah Omar.<sup>73</sup> This SOF support, coupled with the precision firepower of the United States Air Force, enabled the Northern Alliance to defeat the Taliban and Al Qaeda throughout northern Afghanistan. In November 2001, US-supported Northern Alliance victories at Mazar-e-Sharif, Kabul, and Konduz resulted in the seizure of critical population centers and effectively removed the Taliban as a governing authority.<sup>74</sup> With the demise of the Taliban as a formal authority, the OEF campaign in Afghanistan entered a new phase, one that witnessed the physical integration of US SOF and conventional forces at tactical levels as a norm.

In the wake of the collapse of the Taliban government, much of the remaining Taliban and Al Qaeda forces retreated to the more remote areas of the country. To defeat the remaining threat, CENTCOM began deployment of conventional combat forces to Afghanistan.<sup>75</sup> In October 2001, Task Force 1-87 Infantry (TF 1-87), 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, deployed to Karchi-Kanabad in Uzbekistan to provide security for a SOF forward operating base.<sup>76</sup> This battalion repositioned to Bagram Airfield southeast of Kabul in December 2001. In January and February 2002, the next major conventional force to deploy was Task Force Rakkasan, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 101<sup>st</sup> ABN

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<sup>73</sup> Thomas Shanker, “Conduct of War is Redefined by Success of Special Forces”, *The New York Times*, 21 Jan 2002, <[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)>, 12/02/02. Objective Rhino was the Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan. Personnel from the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment conducted a night parachute assault on to this airfield, and after meeting its objectives, extracted themselves to their ISB for future operations. Objective Rhino was later renamed Camp Rhino and occupied by the US Marine Corps.

<sup>74</sup> “The Liberation of Mazar-e Sharif: 5<sup>th</sup> SFG conducts UW in Afghanistan,” 39. Because of the population demographics in Afghanistan, these critical cities represent the majority of the Afghani population and national infrastructure. Removing the Taliban from control of these areas denied them a power base in the northern regions of Afghanistan.

<sup>75</sup> CENTCOM, as in Operation Desert Storm, was the regional combatant command responsible for operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

<sup>76</sup> Gray, interviewed by author. This battalion TF deployed in advance of the rest of the division and worked directly for the JSOTF Commander, COL Mulholland, the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG Commander.

Division.<sup>77</sup> This brigade deployed to Kandahar airfield in southern Afghanistan to conduct combat operations throughout the spring.<sup>78</sup> In June 2002, TF Panther, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division relieved TF Rakkassan.<sup>79</sup>

To defeat the remnants of the Al Qaeda and Taliban forces, the CENTCOM concept of operation arrayed conventional and SOF coalition forces in a noncontiguous framework. In Afghanistan, friendly forces often did not share common boundaries.<sup>80</sup> Specifically, CENTCOM established operations bases at key population centers in order to establish a presence in the region, provide flexibility to react to the dispersed threat, and take advantage of the available, and limited, infrastructure.<sup>81</sup> Two of the larger operations bases were at Bagram and Kandahar, in excess of 275 miles apart. Forces occupying these bases were assigned an area of operation extending out from these bases for force protection; however, offensive operations were frequently conducted in areas

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<sup>77</sup> COL David Gray, Interviewed by MAJ Phillip Kraus. Bagram Afghanistan, 21 August 2002. CJTF-180 Oral History Program. Available on the CALL restricted database. This force was the first major ground combat unit deployed to Afghanistan. It was sent to fill a badly needed capability that was lacking from coalition operations up to that date- large numbers of highly trained infantryman.

<sup>78</sup> Unattributed, CGSC Class presentation by former division staff officer in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during operations in Afghanistan, 22 April 2002.

<sup>79</sup> Schweitzer Martin LTC, Interviewed by author via telephone on 27 JAN 2003. Battalion Commander, 3-505 PIR, 82d ABN Division. LTC Schweitzer's battalion deployed to Afghanistan from JUN to DEC 2002 as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. During that deployment, his battalion conducted extensive operations with SOF in the contemporary environment.

<sup>80</sup> FM 3-0, 4-20. FM 3-0, *Operations*, states, "When AO's are noncontiguous they [units] do not share common boundaries."

<sup>81</sup> COL David Gray, interviewed by author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS. 9 SEP 02. COL Gray served as the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Div G3 during operations in Afghanistan from December 2001 to August 2002. During this period, COL Gray planned and coordinated initial conventional operations based in Uzbekistan, Operation Anaconda, and Operation Mountain Lion. As a result of this, he is a unique primary source to provide detailed information regarding the nature of interaction between SOF and conventional forces.

that were not adjacent to these bases. In some cases, conventional forces operated over 250 nautical miles from their base.

The terrain in the Afghanistan area of operations (AO) had a significant impact on the conduct of US military operations. Afghanistan's rugged terrain provided Al Qaeda and Taliban advantages in cover and concealment for defensive positions. For example, after an intensive reconnaissance effort in one US-led operation in Afghanistan, the coalition forces were only able to identify 50% of the enemy locations.<sup>82</sup> Second, direct visual observation favored the defender in this environment as the rugged mountainous terrain created short lines of sight negating many of our technological advantages.<sup>83</sup> Also, the extensive expanse of mountainous terrain and the general lack of a developed road network provided only limited ground avenues of approach for mounted coalition forces. Many of the roads indicated on maps were roads in name only and do not correspond to an American perception of a road.<sup>84</sup>

Al Qaeda and Taliban forces used a cellular terrorist structure to plan, coordinate, and execute tactical operations. Enemy cells, ranging from five to twenty personnel, dispersed and established bases in prepared cave complexes deep in the sides of mountains.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, some of the Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives sought refuge

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<sup>82</sup> Biddle, 29. In his paper, Biddle states that after weeks of intensive intelligence gathering and surveillance prior to Operation Anaconda, the coalition forces had only identified 50% of the enemy positions; the remaining positions were not even spotted prior to start of the operation.

<sup>83</sup> Biddle, 28. The physical terrain varies from the western reaches of the Himalayan Mountains in the East, with elevations in excess of 14,000 feet to the arid deserts in the southwest of the country.

<sup>84</sup> Hagenbeck, 5.

<sup>85</sup> Adam Geibel, "Operation Anaconda, Shah-I-Kot Valley, Afghanistan 2-10 March 2002," *Military Review*, May-June 2002. Vol. 82, No. 3, 73-74.

amongst the population in order to avoid coalition precision air power strikes.<sup>86</sup> While Taliban and Al Qaeda cells typically remained dispersed and conducted limited operations on their own, they could easily assemble and concentrate their efforts against selected targets.<sup>87</sup>

The Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants used guerilla tactics and typically avoided combat with US forces unless cornered.<sup>88</sup> Military columnist, COL John Antal, author of “Killing Snakes: Lessons Learned from the Fighting in Afghanistan,” described the tactics of the enemy following the collapse of the Taliban as asymmetric. Antal stated, “enemies like Al Qaeda will always avoid decisive battle. They will not fight by our rules. They will run from every fight, unless cornered, and escape to wage a hit and run war.”<sup>89</sup> Guerilla tactics included attacking Afghan militia convoys with mortar fire, and employing direct fire ambushes against coalition assets.<sup>90</sup> Terrorist tactics included an effort to attack and kill every Afghan man in selected villages for cooperating with the interim, Karzai government.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Geibel, 7, 15.

<sup>87</sup> Geibel, 4. Coalition forces saw in Operation ANACONDA that distant cells attempted to mass against coalition forces in the Shah-I-Kot valley once the battle begun. During the engagement, enemy forces were seen massing in Khost and neighboring Pakistan and moving towards the Shah-I-Kot battlefield.

<sup>88</sup> Geibel, 2-5. In the March 2002 Operation Anaconda, coalition forces air assaulted right on top of Al Qaeda positions resulting in very intense and violent engagements. Described by commanders as fights to the death unlike other engagements in the rest of the AO.

<sup>89</sup> John F. Antal, “Killing Snakes: Lessons learned from the Fighting in Afghanistan” Association of the United States Army, June 2002. <[www.usa.org](http://www.usa.org)>, 1/04/03.

<sup>90</sup> Biddle, 28. Al Qaeda and Taliban often ambushed SOF and conventional resupply convoys as well as some humanitarian convoys.

<sup>91</sup> Dennis Steele, “Combat in Hell’s Highland”, Association of the United States Army, January 2002, <[www.usa.org](http://www.usa.org)>, 1/04/03.

The disposition of the threat and his tendency to avoid decisive battle coupled with the implications of the terrain influenced the conduct of friendly operations in Afghanistan. In light of these factors, CENTCOM adapted its tactics, which often included the simultaneous employment of SOF and conventional forces at the small unit level against a single objective. From November 2001 to December 2002, conventional forces conducted full-spectrum operations throughout the Afghanistan AO aimed at defeating the dispersed pockets of enemy resistance.<sup>92</sup> TF Rakkasan, TF Panther and TF 1-87 used helicopter mobility to move infantry units and maneuvered against identified enemy positions within specified AO's.<sup>93</sup> Simultaneously, other conventional forces conducted stability operations and performed humanitarian assistance missions in selected population centers within Afghanistan.

In support of theater operations, SOF conducted three types of missions in Afghanistan: special reconnaissance, direct action, and unconventional warfare (UW).<sup>94</sup> SOF conducted special reconnaissance and direct action missions throughout the area of operations.<sup>95</sup> The purposes of the special reconnaissance and direct action missions were similar to Operation Desert Storm, focusing on identifying and neutralizing theater level

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<sup>92</sup> FM 3-0, 1-15. FM 3-0 defines Full Spectrum Operations as, “Full spectrum operations include offensive, defensive, stability, and support operations (see Figure 1-2, page 1-16). Missions in any environment require Army forces prepared to conduct any combination of these operations.”

<sup>93</sup> Schweitzer, LTC Schweitzer recalled how the use of helicopters in Afghanistan was essential. It provided the mechanical means to overcome the problem of getting from point A to point B in a region with limited infrastructure. More importantly, helicopters facilitated tactical surprise.

<sup>94</sup> Gray, interviewed by Karnes.

<sup>95</sup> Unattributed, CGSC Class presentation by former division staff officer in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during operations in Afghanistan, 22 April 2002. This officer recounted the difficulties the conventional force commander had with deconflicting the efforts of special operations throughout his AO as short-notice, temporary special operations areas of operation would be established regardless of the impact on ongoing conventional operations. Examples of SOF-Conventional conflicts included: having to

objectives such as key leaders in the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Unlike Operation Desert Storm, where SOF special reconnaissance and direct action targets were usually segregated from the conventional force by large distances, SOF-designated targets in Afghanistan were frequently dispersed inside the assigned area of operations of the small unit conventional forces.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, SOF missions to neutralize these targets often resulted in hastily designated, temporary joint special operations areas (JSOA) inside a conventional force's previously designated area of operation. Due to nature of the target and operational security, these JSOAs often occurred with little prior coordination and created significant confusion and disruption to conventional force operations.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, special operations forces continued to conduct UW-oriented operations throughout the theater area of operation after the fall of the Taliban to enhance the internal security environment in Afghanistan.<sup>98</sup> The need to work amongst the population during the conduct of UW operations and conventional force stability

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cancel conventional operations, amending airspace control measures as well as just interrupting flight operations as the airfield as SOF aircraft came and went.

<sup>96</sup> Robert Coleman, MAJ. Interviewed by Author. Leavenworth, KS. 4 SEP 02. MAJ Coleman augmented the JSOTF staff in Afghanistan from December 2001 to May 2002. MAJ Coleman recounted that a primary focus for SOF was the identification and neutralization, either capture or destruction, of key Taliban and Al Qaeda personalities- termed Tier I personalities. Obvious examples included Osama Bin Laden, Mullah Omar, and their lieutenants. Another theater objective that SOF focused on was the destruction of terrorist infrastructure. Unlike Operation Desert Storm, the political and military leadership made a conscious decision that the terrorist leadership were not only viable targets but their death or capture was a military (operational-level) objective.

<sup>97</sup> Coleman. MAJ Coleman stated that the dispersed, fleeting, and time sensitive nature of these targets often required SOF to operate in previously designated conventional AO's with little warning or coordination due to operational security.

<sup>98</sup> "The Liberation of Mazar-e Sharif: 5<sup>th</sup> SFG conducts UW in Afghanistan." 41. Although not UW in the strictest sense because they were not operating as insurgents, these operations because of their reliance on indigenous forces were still UW in nature even while performing more of a counter-insurgency mission.

operations in the villages routinely caused SOF and conventional forces to share the same battlespace.<sup>99</sup>

As in Operation Desert Storm, in Afghanistan, command and control of SOF flowed from SOCSENT through the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) Headquarters, 5<sup>th</sup> SFG, to most of the deployed SOF assets.<sup>100</sup> This command arrangement was consistent with current Army SOF C2 doctrine as contained in FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, dated August 1999, which stated, “ARSOF require a centralized, responsive, and unambiguous C2 structure” for Army SOF units.<sup>101</sup>

Command authority of the JSOTF, and its assigned SOF assets, evolved from October 2001 to June 2002. However, TACON authority of SOF assets never resided below the division headquarters level. Initially, SOCSENT exercised OPCON of the JSOTF.<sup>102</sup> However, in November 2001, the JSOTF was chopped TACON to the CFLCC Headquarters, 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army, in Kuwait because there was no other superior headquarters physically located in Afghanistan at the time.<sup>103</sup> In February 2002, the 10<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Schweitzer. LTC Schweitzer recounted many stories of his troops working in villages alongside SOF UW forces. Sometimes they were focused on the same mission, often the contact was merely incidental.

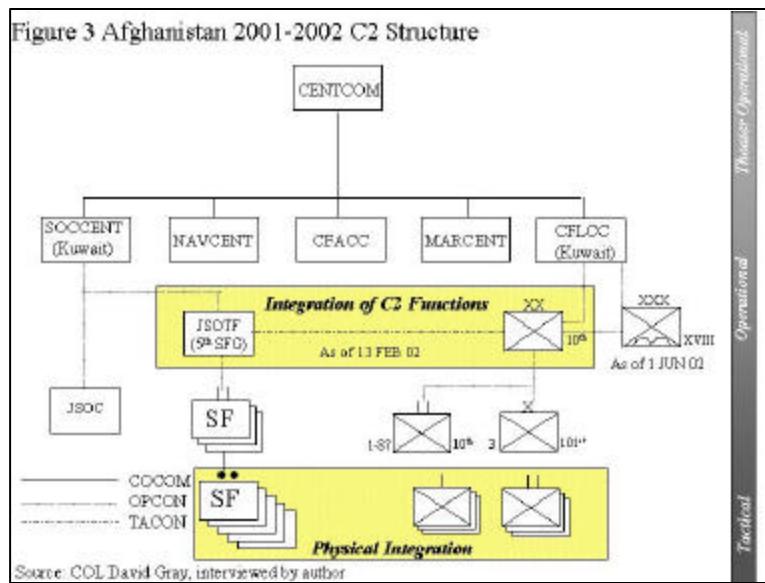
<sup>100</sup> At times, the JSOTF did not have command authority over the Joint Special Operations Command assets (JSOC), which included US Army Rangers, SFOD-D, and other Tier I SOF assets. These assets based out of the same facilities as the conventional forces and other SOF in many cases, but operated under the direct authority of the Joint Force Commander controlled through SOCSENT.

<sup>101</sup> FM 100-25, 4-21.

<sup>102</sup> Coleman. The term JSOTF and 5<sup>th</sup> SFG is interchangeable in this description. The 5<sup>th</sup> SFG Commander, COL Mulholland had many roles in Afghanistan. He was the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG Group Cdr, the JSOTF Cdr, as well as the Army SOF (ARSOF) Cdr for all Army SOF forces in Afghanistan.

<sup>103</sup> FM 101-5-1, 185. TACON is defined as: “Tactical control provides sufficient authority for controlling and directing the application of force or tactical use of combat support assets within the assigned mission or task.”

Mountain Division deployed to Afghanistan and MG Hagenbeck assumed command of operations in Afghanistan as the Commander, Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) Mountain. Upon assumption of command of CJTF Mountain, the JSOTF was chopped TACON to CJTF Mountain.<sup>104</sup> To facilitate coordination, the JSOTF Headquarters, collocated with the CJTF Mountain Headquarters at Bagram Airfield. In June 2002, XVIII Airborne Corps deployed to Afghanistan and LTG Daniel K. McNeill was designated the Commander, CJTF-180 and assumed command of all operations in Afghanistan. At this point, CJTF Mountain was redesignated the CFLCC under CJTF-180 and the JSOTF remained TACON to the CFLCC.<sup>105</sup> Throughout this period, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (CFLCC) exercised command authority over the JSOTF as an operational headquarters. Thus during this period, integration of C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces occurred at the operational level



<sup>104</sup> This relationship did not include a command relationship with compartmentalized special operations assets in theater who continued to be OPCON to SOCCENT.

<sup>105</sup> Gray interviewed by author.

Although in both Operation Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan integration between SOF and conventional force C2 functions took place at the operational level, the physical integration of SOF and conventional forces was significantly different. To illustrate this difference, this monograph will review the major operations from November 2001 to December 2002.

Operation Anaconda was the first major operation involving US conventional ground forces in Afghanistan.<sup>106</sup> In February 2002, intelligence indicated that approximately 200 Taliban and Al Qaeda personnel had concentrated in the Shah-I-Kot Valley.<sup>107</sup> The concept of operation for this operation capitalized on each force's capabilities. On 4 March 2002, CJTF Mountain employed TF Rakkasan, TF 1-87 IN and coalition SOF from seven nations in a cordon around the suspected concentration of Al Qaeda and Taliban forces, identified as OBJ Remington.<sup>108</sup> The conventional forces in the cordon air assaulted over 275 miles from its current bases in Kandahar and Bagram, to the blocking positions.<sup>109</sup> This cordon of conventional forces and SOF provided rapidly mobile, highly trained units that could contain the enemy force as well as directly access precision air power. The main effort was an unconventional warfare force, composed of Afghan militias and US Special Forces. This element was to attack by ground convoy into OBJ Remington once the cordon was in place to destroy the

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<sup>106</sup> William Forrester, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Lessons Learned [Power Point Presentation]. Downloaded via Center for Army Lessons Learned, 12 February 2002.

<sup>107</sup> Gray, interviewed by Karnes.

<sup>108</sup> Biddle, 12. Coalition SOF included US, British, Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian units.

<sup>109</sup> Forrester.

enemy force.<sup>110</sup> This combined force provided the capability to employ precision fires and maintained the perception that this was an Afghan fight.<sup>111</sup>

Physical integration of SOF and conventional forces in Operation Anaconda differed from SOF and conventional force physical integration in Desert Storm in two ways. First, conventional and special operations forces focused on the same tactical objective, OBJ Remington, in extremely close proximity, measured in meters. Second, the SOF and Afghani force was the decisive effort while the conventional force was the supporting effort- just the opposite of what took place in Operation Desert Storm.

Operation Mountain Lion, which occurred from April 2002 to June 2002, also integrated the actions of SOF and conventional forces at the small unit level. Operation Mountain Lion was an extended operation of many small engagements within the designated operations area.<sup>112</sup> Operation Mountain Lion employed combined SOF and Afghan units to develop the intelligence picture in an area for subsequent exploitation by conventional units. Once the combined SOF and Afghani units had a confirmed target, they would hand off the target to a conventional force. In some cases, SOF units would provide additional support to the conventional force on the objective based on the target.<sup>113</sup> In other cases, SOF would maintain control of the operation and employ the

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<sup>110</sup> Gray, interviewed by author. This force was unable to accomplish this task initially. It was ambushed en route to Objective Remington and forced to fall back and regroup.

<sup>111</sup> Gray, interviewed by Karnes.

<sup>112</sup> Coleman. From its design, Operation Mountain Lion was seen as a long duration operation with individual engagements throughout the area of operation to achieve a cumulative effect on the enemy and not a single, decisive battle like Anaconda.

<sup>113</sup> Gray, interviewed by author. Targets during Operation MOUNTAIN SWEEP ranged from enemy personnel to sensitive site exploitation (SSE). In cases where the target involved Tier I personalities, potential WMD or WMD related intelligence, SOF would often either provide additional resources or assume overall direction of the engagement, while maintaining the existing, separate SOF and conventional chains of command as depicted in Figure 3.

conventional unit in a supporting role. Despite the degree of physical integration in this operation, integration of C2 functions remained at the CJTF headquarters.<sup>114</sup>

The next major operation was Operation Mountain Sweep, which occurred from August to December 2002.<sup>115</sup> Operation Mountain Sweep was the first major operation conducted by units from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division after they relieved TF Rakkasan. A description of the operations of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment (TF 3-505), 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division provides a very clear example of how SOF and conventional force physically integrated at the small unit level.

During Operation Mountain Sweep, TF 3-505 conducted sixty-two distinct small unit actions, involving physical integration of SOF forces.<sup>116</sup> Forty of these operations were conducted at the company level; the remaining twenty-two missions were conducted at battalion level. Doctrinally characterized as a cordon and search, these operations typically involved a cordon of conventional units which isolated the objective, usually a village or cave complex. Once the cordon was set, a combined SOF and Afghan militia unit “breached” the objective using its cultural skills to gain permissive entry to the village. Once the special operations force had gained entry, other conventional units would enter the objective to conduct the majority of the search.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Gray, interviewed by author. COL Gray explained that the division headquarters actively controlled these operations between SOF and conventional forces in Opn Mountain Lion.

<sup>115</sup> <[www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain\\_sweep.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain_sweep.htm)> accessed on 19 March 2003.

<sup>116</sup> Schweitzer. LTC Schweitzer’s battalion deployed to Afghanistan from JUN to DEC 2002 as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. During that deployment, his battalion conducted extensive operations with SOF in the contemporary environment.

<sup>117</sup> Schweitzer. Throughout the unit’s deployment, LTC Schweitzer’s battalion developed this scheme of maneuver into a SOP. A critical piece in LTC Schweitzer’s opinion was the cultural skills of the SOF. These skills allowed for easier access to the village, created less tension between the villagers and the conventional force, and generally made a safer environment. LTC Schweitzer’s unit was always

During this operation, the battalion commander, LTC Martin Schweitzer, felt that the degree of physical integration required more than coordinated actions on the objective. In his opinion, the mission also required physical integration in the planning process and he “encouraged” SOF leadership to be present at planning sessions and rehearsals.<sup>118</sup> Again, although the level of physical integration displayed in this operation between SOF and conventional forces was at the small unit level, integration of C2 functions remained at the CJTF level.

As in Operation Desert Storm, the SOF C2 structure and the means used to integrate C2 functions in Afghanistan reflected the current SOF doctrine in FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Special Operations Forces*, dated August 1999. The manual stated that the doctrinal preference for C2 of SOF units is for a SOF centric chain of command and any other structure is clearly an exception. The 1999 version of FM 100-25 stated,

ARSOF and conventional ground forces may operate in close proximity to each other in the accomplishment of the JFC’s mission. While the JFC may determine the requirement to directly place ARSOF under a command relationship of a conventional ground force, he will normally maintain a *centralized, responsive, and unambiguous SOF C2 structure under the JSOTF*.<sup>119</sup> [emphasis mine]

## **Summary**

The combat operations in Afghanistan from March to December 2002 demonstrated a growing trend regarding integration of SOF and conventional forces in tactical combat operations toward increased physical integration at the small unit level. Specifically, SOF and conventional force physical integration at the small unit level was

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prepared to enter the village with conventional forces when SOF efforts failed or SOF was not available, but his preference was always to do it the “easy” way.

<sup>118</sup> Schweitzer. LTC Schweitzer did not have command authority over the SOF leadership, so “encouragement and suggestion” was his primary tool to develop unity of effort in these small unit joint operations between SOF and his conventional force.

<sup>119</sup> FM 100-25, 4-21.

on the rise. However, in every operation, the formal command relationship and the resulting integration of C2 functions remained at the JTF level headquarters in accordance with current doctrine prescribed in 1999 version of FM 100-25.

## Analysis

[Doctrine] must be rooted in time-derived principles, yet forward looking and adaptable to changing technology, threats, and missions. It must be definitive enough to guide operations, yet versatile enough to accommodate a wide variety of worldwide situations.<sup>120</sup>

The case studies in this monograph illustrate two possible military environments in which SOF and conventional forces can operate. Specifically, the case studies presented two different levels of physical integration between SOF and conventional forces on the battlefield, yet clearly one approach to integrating C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces was observed. Integration of C2 functions in both case studies was in accordance with the current SOF C2 doctrine. The 1999 version of FM 100-25 was relatively unchanged since the 1991 version.<sup>121</sup> Brigadier General Stan Cherrie, the VII Corps G3 during Operation Desert Storm, considered the integration of C2 functions between SOF and conventional force adequate, based on the limited physical integration required between conventional units below corps and deployed SOF assets.<sup>122</sup> Conversely, LTC Schweitzer, commander of TF 3-505 in Afghanistan, stated, “the lack of a clearly-defined, appropriate command relationship [between SOF and conventional forces at the small unit level], created conditions of unacceptable risk and

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<sup>120</sup> FM 100-5, 6.

<sup>121</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, there is very little difference between the 1991 and 1999 version of FM 100-25 with respect to integration of SOF and conventional force C2 functions. Both manuals stress centralized control of SOF assets through a SOF centric chain of command extending downward from the Joint Force Special Operations Command (JFSOC) through service SOF component headquarters.

<sup>122</sup> Stan Cherrie, Interviewed by author, Leavenworth, KS. 10 OCT 02 BG (R) Cherrie was the VII Corps G3 during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1991. BG Cherrie recounted that his corps had very little direct interaction with SOF during Operation Desert Storm, instead the Corps relied on the intelligence derived from SOF assets passed down from ARCENT.

impeded mission accomplishment.”<sup>123</sup> If SOF C2 doctrine seems to work well in one environment and not another, then one must question the applicability and validity of current doctrine and ask, “Is current SOF C2 doctrine adequate to support likely contemporary and future battlefield scenarios?”

This chapter will evaluate if FM 100-25 is adequate for applicability across a wide range of contemporary battlefield scenarios. Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action*, provides several tenets to assist the commander in designing a command and control system to ensure unity of effort.<sup>124</sup> This monograph deems three of them, proper command relationships, timely decision making, and robust integrating mechanisms, relevant criteria for evaluating the adequacy of SOF C2 doctrine. The aim is to measure if FM 100-25 prescribes adequate guidance to effectively integrate C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces necessary to support the lowest level of physical integration.

The three criteria chosen are relevant to the integration of C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces because of the impact on an organization’s ability to handle uncertainty. In his book, *Command in War*, Martin Van Creveld stated that an organization can best deal with uncertainty by adapting how it processes information or adjusting itself to require less information.<sup>125</sup> Specifically, Van Creveld recommended pushing decision-making authority as low as possible within self-contained, task-

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<sup>123</sup> Schweitzer.

<sup>124</sup> JP 0-2, III-17. The complete list of Tenets of C2 Theory include: Proper Command Relationships, Information Management., Implicit Communication, Timely Decision-Making , Robust Integration, Synchronization, and Coordination Mechanisms , Battle Rhythm Discipline, Responsive, Interoperable Support Systems, Situational Awareness, Mutual Trust.

<sup>125</sup> Van Creveld, 269.

organized formations. Additionally, Van Creveld recommended that a network of directed telescopes, or liaisons, work outside the formal reporting channels of the C2 system to increase the velocity of the flow of information.<sup>126</sup> Van Creveld's conclusions support the criteria chosen from JP 0-2's tenets of command.

### **Command Relationships**

The first criterion, "proper command relationship" addresses Van Creveld's requirement to push decision-making authority as low as possible within self-contained, task-organized formations. A proper command relationship matches the right degree of command authority to the level of physical integration.

The 1991 version of FM 100-25 normally restricted conventional force command authority over SOF assets to the component or joint task force level. Often, this exceeded the level of physical integration as evidenced by recent operations in Afghanistan. Operations in Afghanistan illustrated a need for physical integration between SOF and conventional forces down to the company level. For example, during Operation Mountain Sweep, LTC Schweitzer, commander, TF 3-505, required the authority to task, maneuver, and control the SOF assets operating in close proximity to his forces.<sup>127</sup> The authority to task, maneuver and control resides in the command relationship of TACON.<sup>128</sup> Unfortunately, the doctrinal C2 arrangement for SOF forces employed in Afghanistan prevented LTC Schweitzer from benefiting from a more appropriate command relationship between his unit and SOF forces in his AO.

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 270.

<sup>127</sup> Schweitzer.

<sup>128</sup> See Note 106.

During Operation Mountain Sweep, TACON of SOF forces remained at the CFLCC level, resulting in LTC Schweitzer coordinating joint conventional and SOF operations on the basis of a handshake between himself and the SOF commander.<sup>129</sup> LTC Schweitzer did experience that some SOF assets were willing to accept a “TACON-in-being” agreement for the purpose of the operation; however, some SOF units relied on their SOF-centric chain of command. According to LTC Schweitzer, operating without this agreement produced nearly unacceptable conditions of risk.<sup>130</sup>

This lack of a proper command relationship also resulted in difficulties in maintaining accurate situational awareness of the objective area. This lack of situational awareness impacted the battalion’s ability to deconflict their actions and fires with SOF’s fires inside the battalion’s AO.<sup>131</sup> In this case, doctrinally correct command relationships prevented integration of C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces at the level of physical integration displayed on the battlefield by SOF and conventional forces. This deficiency in doctrine caused frustration amongst commanders, inefficiency in the organization, and lastly increased the risk to soldiers.

### **Timely Decision Making**

The second criterion is “timely decision making.” Joint Publication 0-2 states, “The commander who can gather information and make decisions faster and better will generate a quicker tempo of operations and gain a decided military advantage.”<sup>132</sup> The velocity at which an organization processes information is largely a product of its

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<sup>129</sup> Schweitzer.

<sup>130</sup> Schweitzer.

<sup>131</sup> Schweitzer.

<sup>132</sup> JP 0-2, III-15.

structure. Multiple layers of command between the observer and the decision maker impede the velocity of information and affect timely decision making. To counter this, Van Creveld argues that organizations should task organize and push decision making as low as possible.<sup>133</sup>

FM 100-25's emphasis on a SOF-centric chain of command that integrates C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces at the joint force or component headquarters level seems to unnecessarily impede timely decision-making. This command structure, as presented in FM 100-25, fixes the information cross over point from SOF to conventional forces in the operational level headquarters. This creates multiple layers of command between SOF assets and the conventional forces physically integrated on the ground and unnecessarily slows the flow of information and decision-making guidance.

In Afghanistan, the doctrinal, SOF-centric, command structure required information to flow up to the CJTF Headquarters in order to cross over from the special operations chain of command to the conventional force chain of command.<sup>134</sup> Given the nature of the information and the type of decision required this was often inadequate and extremely risky. During Operation Anaconda, for example, Ranger and conventional infantry forces, in visual range of each other, could not directly talk to each other. Instead, conventional units had to forward reports up to the division headquarters so the

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<sup>133</sup> Van Creveld, 271.

<sup>134</sup> In this case, CJTF refers to either CJTF –Mountain (FEB 2002 to JUN 2002) and CJTF-180 (JUN 2002 to Present).

JSOTF could pass the information back down to the Ranger unit, and vice versa.<sup>135</sup> In another example, TF Rakkasan soldiers performing perimeter security in Kandahar often observed unidentified indigenous units approaching their position but had to wait 10-15 minutes for clearance to engage while the report was forwarded up through 8 different command nodes in order to confirm it was not a SOF asset.<sup>136</sup> The decisions in both of these examples were of an immediate nature and required immediate action. Soldiers fighting in Anaconda and performing perimeter security in Kandahar required timely decisions measured in seconds and minutes. However, the SOF-conventional force command structure in Afghanistan in some cases required up to 10-15 minutes to produce these types of decisions.<sup>137</sup> Again, this employment of a SOF-centric chain of command, with integrated C2 functions between SOF and conventional forces at echelons above the observed level of physical integration contributed to making timely decisions difficult.

### **Robust Integration, Synchronization, and Coordination Mechanisms**

Ideally, organizations will match integration of C2 functions to more efficiently support the level of physical integration demonstrated. In cases where this is not possible, the exchange of liaisons is the preferred means to enhance unity of effort. JP 0-2 emphasizes the exchange of liaisons as a means to achieve synchronization and coordination. Similarly, Martin Van Creveld recommended extensive use of liaisons because of their ability to communicate outside the formal channels of communication,

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<sup>135</sup> This statement is attributed to several SOF and conventional force officers who participated in ANACONDA as either unit leaders or unit liaisons to SOF or conventional headquarters.

<sup>136</sup> Unattributed, CGSC Class presentation by former division staff officer in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division during operations in Afghanistan. In this example, 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division had not assumed the duties of CJTF Mountain yet, and TF Rakkasan was still reporting directly to the CFLCC in Kuwait. In this case, the report had to pass through: Plt, Co, Bn, Bde, CFLCC, SOCCTF, FOB.

<sup>137</sup> Schweitzer.

thus facilitating even greater information flow and better command and control as well as removing some of the burden from the formal communications channel.<sup>138</sup> However, just as command relationships must exist at the level of physical integration, liaison elements should ideally exist at and below the level of physical integration to support the command relationship.<sup>139</sup>

The 1999 version of FM 100-25 is written on the premise that integration is achieved through synchronization and deconfliction, as a result of effective coordination through liaison.<sup>140</sup> This manual provides for liaisons between SOF and conventional forces in three ways: the SOCCE, the Special Operations Coordinator (SOCOORD), and Special Forces Liaison Element (SFLE). The SOCCE is the “focal point for synchronization with the conventional force.”<sup>141</sup> The SOCCE is typically a SF company headquarters element with augmentation designed to collocate with a Corps or MEF headquarters. The SOCOORD, assigned to a corps or MEF headquarters, is the only permanent special operations liaison assigned to a tactical conventional force headquarters. The SOCOORD is a special staff officer that provides subject matter expertise on SOF employment to the corps or MEF commander; however, he does not

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<sup>138</sup> Van Creveld, 271. Van Creveld groups liaisons and “directed telescopes” together as means for organizations to increase their information processing capability and deal with uncertainty better.

<sup>139</sup> Van Creveld, 271. Derived from Van Creveld’s role for liaisons. If liaisons are designed to work around the formal communications channels than they have to exist at levels below the formal channels. For example, subordinate units commonly position liaisons in their superior headquarters in order to reduce the burden on the formal command channel of communications.

<sup>140</sup> FM 100-25, B-1.

<sup>141</sup> FM 100-25, 4-15.

have command authority over SOF assets in the corps or MEF AO.<sup>142</sup> The SFLE is a liaison element built on an Operational Detachment-Alpha (SF A-team). The SFLE's primary mission is to facilitate coordination between multinational forces and US conventional forces; however, it can also perform liaison functions within US conventional forces down to division and separate brigade level.<sup>143</sup>

In cases where liaisons are needed at the brigade level, as in Afghanistan, FM 100-25's guidance is not adequate. In Afghanistan, physical integration clearly extended down to the battalion level; however the liaison structure prescribed in FM 100-25 again focused at the corps level. FM 100-25 explicitly states that the SOCCE is designed to operate with the corps and possibly division headquarters, the manual does not contain any discussion related to establishing a SOCCE lower than that.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, the manual does not prescribe assignment of a special operations staff officer (SOCOORD) below the corps level, particularly at brigade and battalion level.

According to FM 100-25, the only liaison option possible to support physical integration at the brigade or battalion level is to place a SFLE with the conventional force headquarters. This option however affects theater employment of SOF as well as the SFLE's abilities to integrate effectively with the conventional force. First, every SFLE

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<sup>142</sup> FM 100-25, dtd 1999, 4-16. FM 100-25 states, "with augmentation it can function as the J3 SO detachment if the corps or MEF is established as a JTF. The SOCOORD element identifies potential employment opportunities for selected ARSOF units support of the corps or MEF commander's operations."

<sup>143</sup> FM 100-25, dtd 1999, 4-16. Fm 100-25 defines a SFLE as, "an SF element that conducts liaison between US conventional forces division-level headquarters and subordinate HN or multinational forces brigades and battalions. It is formed only as needed.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 4-15 through 4-16.

used is one less Special Forces A-Team available for use in the area of operations.<sup>145</sup>

Second, SFLE's lack some of the capabilities of the more robust SOCCE and even the SOCOORD resulting in degraded performance compared to a SOCCE or SOCOORD.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> A Special Forces A-Team is the basic element of employment in Army Special Forces operations. It is based on a 12-man element. Most A-Teams are capable of conducting any of the SF primary missions; however as a matter of practice, teams are organized based on mission specialty.

<sup>146</sup> Shortfalls that can degrade performance include: experience- the SOCCE is commanded by a SF major and the SOCOORD is a SF LTC, one would have to assume that these personnel would be better qualified to advise a conventional US battalion or brigade commander than a captain in command of a A-Team. LTC Schweitzer specifically mentioned having difficulties with some A-team leaders when they thought they knew more about commanding an infantry battalion than he did. Secondly, the SOCCE and the SOCOORD staff is better equipped to integrate into an existing C2 system and conduct long duration operations.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

“Doctrine should accommodate a wide variety of worldwide situations.”<sup>147</sup> FM 100-25 as the capstone, Army Special Operations manual should provide applicable, definitive guidance that a commander can apply to potential scenarios. This monograph determined that when applied against an Afghanistan-like scenario, the 1999 version of FM 100-25 does not adequately facilitate unity of command or effort at the lowest levels.

First, FM 100-25 does not guide the commander to establish proper command relationships at the level of physical integration. Second, the SOF-centric C2 structure prescribed in FM 100-25 does not seem to support timely decision making in possible scenarios like Afghanistan. Finally, the structure of liaisons as prescribed in FM 100-25 is not adequate for scenarios that require low-level physical integration, such as recent operations in Afghanistan. The liaison structure in the 1999 version of FM 100-25 is based on physical integration at the component levels and supports liaisons to corps-sized units as the norm. Therefore, FM 100-25 does not adequately support integration of C2 functions between special operations and conventional forces on the contemporary or future battlefield.

Recommendations for improvement to FM 100-25 could increase its applicability across a broader range of operational scenarios. Specifically, recommendations should address how to ensure the integration of SOF and conventional force C2 functions at the lowest level where physical integration between SOF and conventional forces occurs. First, FM 100-25 must encourage command relationships between SOF and conventional forces at the level of physical integration required by the situation. The manual must

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<sup>147</sup> FM 100-5, 6.

include discussions that emphasize flexible command structures and graphics that depict SOF assets working with battalion-level, conventional forces as needed by the situation. Additionally, the manual should incorporate the exceptions to the SOF-centric command structure as written in the 1991 version of FM 100-25.<sup>148</sup> The future version of FM 100-25 might contain a table such as the one below to reinforce integration of C2 functions at the level of physical integration.

Table 1. SOF and Conventional Force Command Relationship Rules

<i>If SOF are operating...</i>	<i>Then...</i>
In the Conventional Force AO	SOF are placed OPCON or TACON to the conventional force commander.
In the Conventional Force AI	a SOF provides a liaison element to the conventional force headquarters.
Outside the Conventional Force AI	no command relationship or liaison is necessary.

These simple rules are adaptable to nearly any situation. Whether commanders choose to physically integrate SOF and conventional forces at the component level, as in Desert Storm, or battalion level, as in Afghanistan, these three simple rules provide clear guidance for commanders to integrate the C2 functions of SOF and conventional forces through proper command relationships. Additionally, these rules could also support integration of conventional forces in a designated Joint Special Operations Area (JSOA).

FM 100-25 can facilitate timely decision-making by better aligning SOF C2 organizations with the conventional headquarters in accordance with the level of physical integration. FM 100-25 must expand its discussion of the employment of the SOCCE. It should emphasize that the SOCCE will integrate at the level of physical integration, and not restrict it to a specific echelon of command. FM 100-25 should provide guidance for

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<sup>148</sup> FM 100-25, dtd. Apr 1991, 4-39 to 4-41.

incorporating the SOCCE with headquarters ranging from corps to brigade level. Establishing a SOCCE at the lowest possible level would benefit both SOF and conventional forces by flattening the command structure, fostering greater unity of effort, therefore increasing the velocity of information in support of decision-making.

Lastly, FM 100-25 should prescribe more robust integrating, synchronizing, and coordinating mechanisms by supporting extensive liaison at the brigade and battalion level. Currently, the SFLE is the lowest echelon liaison prescribed in doctrine. Doctrine specifies the function of the SFLE as facilitating multinational operations; however, it can also be used as a liaison to US divisions and separate brigades. Future doctrine should expand on the second function of the SFLE and describe the SFLE as a brigade, and below if necessary, liaison element for conventional forces. Therefore, if the SOCCE is established at brigade-level, then a SFLE could serve at the battalion task force level in those circumstances where SOF and conventional force physical integration was required at the battalion or lower level. If the SOCCE remains above the brigade level, the SFLE is the logical choice for a SOF liaison at the brigade when the situation requires SOF and conventional force physical integration. Finally, FM 100-25 should also address conventional force liaison packages in support of SOF headquarters. The manual should direct SOF and conventional forces to provide mutual liaisons in each other's headquarters. Again, the aim of the future manual should be to emphasize robust liaisons at all levels as a means to improve unity of effort.

## **Summary**

Operations in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and operations in Operation Desert Storm represent two disparate environments in which SOF and

conventional forces could operate together. Currently, existing special operations doctrine does not adequately provide guidance for effective command and control integration of special operations and conventional forces in both of these environments, which could potentially occur in the foreseeable future. FM 100-25 must change to reflect the possible requirements of contemporary environments. The manual must encourage command relationships in accordance with the level of physical integration.

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Coleman, Robert. MAJ. Interviewed by Author. Leavenworth, KS. 4 September 2002. MAJ Coleman augmented the JSOTF staff in Afghanistan from December 2001 to May 2002.

Faistenhammer, William F. Interviewed by author, via telephone, 23 January 2003. COL Faistenhammer served as the 5<sup>th</sup> SFG (A) Executive Officer during Operation Desert Storm and later as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion SFG (A) Commander during UNOSOM II.

Gray, David. Interviewed by author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS. 9 September 2002. COL Gray served as the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Div G3 during operations in Afghanistan from December 2001 to August 2002. During this period, COL Gray planned and coordinated initial conventional operations based in Uzbekistan, Operation Anaconda, and Operation Mountain Lion. As a result of this, he is a unique primary source to provide detailed information regarding the nature of interaction between SOF and conventional forces

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Schoomaker, Peter, J GEN(R), Interview by author, Ft. Leavenworth, KS. 19 September 2002. GEN Schoomaker, as the former commander of SOCOM and a Special Operations soldier with over 25 years experience, is an invaluable research asset for this monograph. In one person he provides, a vast quantity of operational and conceptual knowledge regarding the role and relationship of special operations forces to conventional forces. His assistance will provide many of the small bits of data required to fill in the gaps of this monograph.

Schweitzer Martin LTC, Interviewed by author via telephone on 27 January 2003  
Battalion Commander, 3-505 PIR, 82d ABN Division. LTC Schweitzer's battalion deployed to Afghanistan from JUN to DEC 2002 as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. During that deployment, his battalion conducted extensive operations with SOF in the contemporary environment.

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